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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART II. ASIA AND OCEANIA

Section 13 - Australia and New Zealand

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03334

II.13 AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Area Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

1. At the end of 1993, the Australian Government estimated the number of refugees in the country at 32,400 persons. Special humanitarian cases who arrived in 1993 totalled 13,000, including resettled refugees and "Women-at-Risk" (4,000), humanitarian cases (2,650) and those under the Special Assistance Category (6,350). In addition, some 3,650 refugees were accepted for resettlement. There were 2,957 applications for refugee status in the period June 1992 to July 1993, and 425 applications were accepted.

2. In New Zealand, the cumulative refugee population stood at 10,388 persons at the end of 1993, with the majority of these from Cambodia, Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Iraq. A total of 416 refugees were accepted for resettlement in 1993, compared with 338 in 1992.

3. In addition to Australia and New Zealand, including the Cook Islands and Niue, the UNHCR Regional Office in Canberra covers ten countries in the South Pacific: the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. These islands have to-date not witnessed any significant influx of asylum seekers.

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

4. In 1993, new developments in the refugee status determination procedures in Australia had an impact on the legal advice functions of the Regional Office in Canberra. In addition to existing efforts to offer legal advice to several hundred refugee status determination officers for first-instance decisions, increased activities had to be undertaken because of the establishment in Australia of an independent appeals authority, the Refugee Review Tribunal. This development brought UNHCR's direct involvement in the refugee status determination process to an end and gave rise to a new advisory function and refugee law training, especially for the new appeals body. It also necessitated training and public information activities relevant to refugee counsellors, case workers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are expected to assume a more pro-active role in refugee advocacy in the absence of UNHCR's direct involvement.

5. In response to the increasing demands, the Regional Office in Canberra participated in 18 seminars, round tables and workshops in 1993. Three training sessions were also held for the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and a further two were conducted for the Refugee Review Tribunal.

6. A total of 152 persons were voluntarily repatriated in 1993 from Australia. Of these, 29 persons were repatriated to Chile, 54 persons to El Salvador and nine persons to South Africa under UNHCR auspices.

7. UNHCR assistance to the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS), which provided counselling services to asylum-seekers and refugees in Australia, was completed in 1993.

8. In New Zealand, the Canberra Regional Office attained full voting membership at the Refugee Status Appeals Authority (RSAA) at the request of the Government. This required the presence of one UNHCR staff member in all review proceedings. In 1993, five training sessions were conducted, and the Regional Office actively participated in four seminars and workshops on refugee related subjects with the Refugee Status Section.

9. With the change in the refugee status determination mechanism in Australia as of 1 July 1993, UNHCR's direct involvement in refugees status proceedings also ceased as of that date. As a consequence, the Australian trust fund established in 1991 to support UNHCR legal officers and support staff ceased to exist by the end of 1993. The costs of UNHCR's activities in Australia, New Zealand and in the 12 Pacific islands, for both 1994 and 1995, are covered under General Programmes.

Programme objectives and priorities

10. Asylum seekers who arrive in Australia illegally are held in detention centres. All the needs of refugees and asylum seekers are met by the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups.

11. UNHCR's main objectives in Australia for both 1994 and 1995 are to promote, uphold and safeguard the Convention and internationally recognized standards of treatment affecting refugees and asylum seekers, and to assist the Government and NGOs in finding permanent solutions to their plight.

12. In New Zealand, UNHCR will continue to function as a full voting member at the RSAA. UNHCR's main objectives for 1994 and 1995 will focus on training activities for officers of the New Zealand Immigration Service, as well as NGOs who play a major role with regard to advocacy, durable solutions, government refugee resettlement quotas and counselling asylum-seekers.

13. The Regional Office in Canberra will continue to be involved in resettlement activities and facilitating or supporting activities for some 350 refugee cases. Australia's annual refugee and humanitarian quota is 13,000, of whom 4,000 are refugees. New Zealand's refugee resettlement quota is 800 per year.

14. In the South Pacific, UNHCR will provide expanded training in refugee law, human rights and humanitarian law, seminars and workshops, involving major legal and enforcement officials and NGOs. Emphasis will be given to the three signatory states, Fiji, Tuvalu and Western Samoa.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

15. The UNHCR Regional Office in Canberra works in close cooperation with the relevant departments of the Australian and New Zealand Governments, particularly with the Departments of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs as well as Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia, and the Department of Labour and the Ministry of External Relations and Trade in New Zealand. UNHCR has observer

status on the RSRC in Australia and is a full voting member on the RSAA in New Zealand.

16. In Australia, voluntary agencies concerned with refugees include AUSTCARE and the Refugee Council of Australia and, in New Zealand, the Refugee and Migrant Service.

General Programmes

17. UNHCR's assistance to the case worker service for individuals wishing to apply for refugee status ended in 1993, as planned.

Special Programmes

18. Provision for staff costs and related expenditures for assistance for the determination of refugee status in Australia continued into 1994.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

19. Total expenditure in 1993 was lower than expected, mainly as a result of the non-occupancy of two posts of Legal Officer and Associate Legal Officer. In addition, one post of External Relations Officer at the National Officer level also remained vacant since the establishment of this post in April 1993. Consequently, expenditures under staff costs were substantially lower than expected. Minor savings were realized under the chapter for office supplies and materials. The provision made for the acquisition of permanent equipment was not fully utilized due to reduced needs and lower than expected costs for computer equipment.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

20. The revised 1994 requirements have been increased in comparison to the initial estimates. The posts of two Legal Officers, Documentation Clerk and Registry Clerk were extended from 1 April to 31 December 1995. The posts of External Relations Officer at the National Officer level (NOC) and Associate Protection Officer (JPO) were also extended to the end of 1995. Furthermore, additional short term staff have been recruited in connection with assistance provided for the determination of refugee status of persons of various nationalities. Consequently, staff costs have increased substantially. Travel on official business under non-staff costs has also been revised upwards, with the planned increase in local and regional travel of Legal Officers and the relatively new Regional Representative in dealing with protection, public information and donor related matters. General operating expenses have been increased as the rental cost of the office premises, which the Regional Office is currently occupying, is expected to increase when the current lease agreement is due for renewal in August 1994. In addition, the warranty on the computer equipment at the Regional Office has expired and it will therefore be necessary to arrange a service contract. Needs under the budget chapter for the acquisition of furniture and equipment are lower than the initial estimates, since much of the computer equipment needs were met in 1993.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

21. The total initial 1995 estimate is slightly lower than the 1994 revised requirements due to a reduction under overtime and local and regional travel. Needs under other staff costs remain at the revised 1994 levels and relate to the extension of all posts until 31 December 1995. As in previous years provision has been made as in previous years under contractual services for the printing and distribution of Public Information materials. General operating expenses and estimated needs under office supplies and materials remain largely at the revised 1994 levels. A small provision has been made for the purchase of office furniture. No other major changes in activities are foreseen for 1995.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
7.8	–	–	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	–
134.4 a/	–	–	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
–	–	683.9	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	754.8
142.2	0.0	683.9	SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	754.8
535.3	591.8	116.2	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	109.0
677.5	**591.8**	**800.1**	**TOTAL (1)**	**863.8**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
329.9	–	–	OTHER TRUST FUNDS Assistance towards determination of legal refugee status	–
–	–	210.4	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	129.6
43.4	25.3	25.3	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT Junior Professional Officer	25.3
373.3	**25.3**	**235.7**	**TOTAL (2)**	**154.9**
1,050.8	**617.1**	**1,035.8**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**1,018.7**

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation